

**MINUTES
COLUMBUS PLAN COMMISSION MEETING
AUGUST 8, 2012 AT 4:00 P.M.
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY HALL
123 WASHINGTON STREET
COLUMBUS, INDIANA**

Members Present: Roger Lang (President), Nancy Ann Brown, Dick Gaynor, Frank Jerome, Dave Hayward, Mike Harris, Tom Wetherald, Brian Schroer, John Hatter, Dave Fisher and Jorge R. Morales (County Liaison).

Members Absent: Dave Bonnell.

Staff Present: Jeff Bergman, Melissa Begley, Heather Pope, Rae-Leigh Stark, Thom Weintraut, Trudi Smith, Sondra Bohn, and Alan Whitted (Deputy City Attorney).

CONSENT AGENDA

Minutes of the July 11, 2012 meeting (Approval and Signing).

Approval of minutes was continued to the September 2012 meeting.

OLD BUSINESS REQUIRING COMMISSION ACTION

None

NEW BUSINESS REQUIRING COMMISSION ACTION

DP-12-16: Historic City Hall – a request by G. Terrence Coriden for approval of a site development plan for the construction of 2 freestanding signs, including a modification from Zoning Ordinance Section 10 (Table 10.1) to allow a freestanding sign on a lot that is less than the minimum 2 acres size and does not meet the 20 foot building setback requirement. The property is located at 445 5th Street in the City of Columbus.

Mr. Naber presented the background information on this request.

Mr. Terry Coriden and Mr. Bill Russell, owners of the property represented the petitioner.

Mr. Coriden stated that he and Mr. Russell had designed the signs and then turned that over to a landscape architect for the final renderings. He stated he did not want to install anything on the building because it was his opinion the historic value would be compromised.

Mr. Jerome stated he thought it was a nice looking sign

Mr. Coriden stated that the freestanding signs are designed to replicate the architectural features of the historic City Hall building. He stated he wanted something that would fit in with

the character of the building.

Discussion was held about the freestanding sign hiding a utility box that was facing Franklin Street. Ms. Brown stated she thought that would be a good thing.

Mr. Lang opened the meeting to the public.

There was no one to speak for or against this request.

Mr. Lang closed the meeting to the public.

Mr. Bergman stated that staff would recommend a continuance so the design would more closely follow the Secretary of the Interior standards for historic structures. He stated the new signs should be differentiated from the old and be compatible with the historic materials. He stated it should be more of an urban design and the design of the new sign should make it clear which is historic and what is new.

Motion: Ms. Brown made a motion to continue this request. The request was granted with the consensus that the Commission approved of the concept of the freestanding signs and the applicant would work with staff to make the signs to look less like the building and not be as tall. Mr. Wetherald seconded the motion and it carried with a vote of 10-0.

RZ-12-04: Free Methodist Church – a request by the Free Methodist Church of North America to rezone two properties from RE (Residential: Established) to P (Public/Semi-Public Facilities). The properties are located at 1511 22nd Street and 2126 Elm Street in the City of Columbus.

Mr. Raymond King, Trustee of the Free Methodist Church and Jim West member of the Building Committee represented the petitioners

Mr. King stated that the rezoning is being requested for placing an existing church in a zoning district that would be more consistent to its use and would allow them to construct two new parking lots.

Mr. King stated that the church has been buying other properties in the same block and demolishing the homes and businesses located on them. These properties have been used informally for church parking.

Mr. Lang opened the meeting to the public.

There was no one to speak for or against this request.

Mr. Lang closed the meeting to the public.

Mr. Bergman stated that staff would recommend sending a favorable recommendation to the City Council.

Motion: Mr. Fisher made a motion to send a favorable recommendation to the City Council. Ms. Brown seconded the motion and it carried with a vote of 10-0.

DP-12-18: Free Methodist Church – a request by the Free Methodist Church of North America for site development plan approval for the construction of a new parking lot, including (1) a modification from Zoning Ordinance Section 7.3(Part 2)(A) to waive the requirement of installing a sidewalk, (2) a modification from Zoning Ordinance Section 8.2(E) to waive the requirement to install a Buffer Yard Type B, (3) a modification from Zoning Ordinance Section 8.2(E) to reduce the Buffer Yard Type B to 5 feet, 20 feet less than the minimum and (4) a modification from Zoning Ordinance Section 7 (Table 7.3) to waive the requirement for barrier free parking spaces. The properties are located at 1511 22nd Street and 2126 Elm Street in the City of Columbus.

Mr. Naber presented the staff information on this request.

Mr. Raymond King, Trustee of the Free Methodist Church and Jim West member of the Building Committee represented the petitioners

Mr. Lang opened the meeting to the public.

Ms. Peggy Mitchel stated it was her opinion that the parking lot was needed for the church and the landscaping would enhance the appearance of the space.

Mr. Lang closed the meeting to the public.

Mr. Bergman stated that he would recommend modifications for the following items: (1) to remove the buffer yard type B requirement along two 100 foot segments along the east property line of 1511 22nd Street, (2) to reduce the buffer yard width from 25 feet to 5 feet along the north and south property lines for 2126 (3) to remove the requirement from installing a sidewalk for 2126 along Elm Street, and (4) to provide no handicap accessible parking spaces, 2 fewer than required for 1511 22nd Street, and also the following conditions: which must be met prior to the occupancy of the complete project: (a) tree species and minimum planting heights shall be shown on an updated site plan, (b) 2 shrubs proposed for 2126 Elm shall be relocated out of the sight visibility triangle at the entrance to the parking lot from Elm Street, (c) add sign to one handicap accessible parking space in (One space is missing required sign),(d) add 2 additional shrubs along the north and south buffer yards for 2126 Elm,(e) Buffer width dimension for north and south property lines for 2126 Elm Street shall be listed as 5 feet and (f) a sidewalk shall be installed from Maple Street to the alley along the north side of 21st Street.

Motion: Mr. Fisher made a motion to approve the modification for **DP-12-18** to remove the buffer yard type B requirement along two 100-foot segments along the east property line 1511 22nd Street. Mr. Hayward seconded the motion and it carried unanimously by voice vote.

Motion: Mr. Fisher made a motion to approve the modification for **DP-12-18** to reduce the buffer yard width from 25 feet to 5 feet along the north and south property lines for 2126 Elm Street. Mr. Harris seconded the motion and it carried unanimously by voice vote.

Motion: Mr. Fisher made a motion to approve the modification for **DP-12-18** to remove the requirement from installing a sidewalk for 2126 along Elm Street. Mr. Wetherald seconded this motion and it carried unanimously by voice vote.

Motion: Mr. Fisher made a motion to approve the modification for **DP 12-18** in order to provide

no handicap accessible parking spaces, 2 fewer than required for 2126 Elm Street. Ms. Brown seconded the motion and it carried unanimously by voice vote.

Motion: Ms. Brown made a motion to approve the following conditions for **DP-12-18**, which must be met prior to the occupancy of the complete project: (a) tree species and minimum planting heights shall be shown on an updated site plan, (b) 2 shrubs proposed for 2126 Elm Street shall be relocated out of the sight visibility triangle at the entrance to the parking lot from Elm Street, (c) add sign to one handicap accessible parking space in 2126 Elm (One space is missing required sign),(d) add 2 additional shrubs along the north and south buffer yards for 2126 Elm.,(e) Buffer width dimension for north and south property lines for 2126 Elm Street shall be listed as 5 feet and (f) a sidewalk shall be installed from Maple Street to the alley along the north side of 21st Street. Mr. Wetherald seconded the motion and it carried with a vote of 10-0.

DP-12-19: Urban Elements – a request by Elements on Washington Street, LLC for site development plan approval for the construction of a new multi-family/commercial building, including a modification from Zoning Ordinance Section 3.16(C) to allow a ground floor living area and a modification from Zoning Ordinance Section 3.16(C) to exceed the maximum height for a portion of the primary structure by 5 feet for a total of 65 feet in height. The property is located at 600 Washington Street in the City of Columbus.

Ms. Pope presented the background information on this request.

Mr. Steve Risting with CSO Architects and Janee Sprague owner of Urban Elements represented the petitioners.

Mr. Risting stated they are proposing to construct a five-story apartment building with 40% dedicated to commercial space on the first floor and the rest of the first floor would be apartments. He stated construction would need to start in October 2012.

Mr. Risting stated they have looked at different apartment projects in Indiana, New York and Chicago. He stated they wanted to offer a different variety of space for renters. Mr. Risting stated they wanted high-end rentals for downtown and wanted to appeal to people from around the world. He stated their goal was to keep them smaller than most apartments.

Mr. Jerome asked if they were rentals. Mr. Risting stated yes.

Mr. Harris asked if all of the first floor would ever be commercial. Ms. Brown stated seeing all the commercial development downtown on third & fourth Streets that has happened, it could just as quickly move north for more space that is commercial.

Mr. Risting stated that office use is viable on the ground floor, but retail space is not. He stated that all the first floor would be constructed with building materials so that it could be used as commercial space later.

Mr. Lang stated it was hard for him to visualize what the apartments would look like on the first floor with storefront windows at the street level.

Mr. Risting stated they were proposing all the same windows be installed in the building. He stated they are aluminum frame windows, floor to ceiling. He stated the windows for the first

floor apartments could be raised six feet and apartments would have a lot of natural light.

Mr. Lang stated it was his opinion that if the brick were constructed six feet before installing a window, the brick façade would not be an attractive sight from the sidewalk. He stated the residential part might not be as attractive as commercial space when looking into the windows.

Mr. Fisher stated it was his opinion that when he walked down Washington Street he could look into some office space that was untidy. He stated the responsibility of what goes on inside the building is up to the tenant that lives there. Mr. Fisher stated there are many appropriate window coverings that would work to give them privacy. He stated it was his opinion this was an internal problem with the building. Mr. Fisher stated just because they are residents does not mean they would look better or worse than other storefronts.

Ms. Sprague stated she liked everything to be uniform, so the windows coverings would all be the same.

Mr. Fisher stated this was a non-issue for him.

Mr. Risting stated that all the windows on the upper floors would be the same as the ones at street level. He stated the windows had been designed for the building and would not detract from the design. Mr. Risting stated these are commercial grade windows in order to get a quality of more light and air, even in the ground floor units.

Mr. Risting stated they did not want a brick wall on the Washington Street side. He stated that is the reason for the rhythm of the large windows, which are commercial and are consistent with the other windows in the area. Mr. Risting stated it was his opinion that this development was encouraged by the Comprehensive Plan and was important to the revitalization of downtown.

Mr. Bergman asked if the five-foot installation of brick would become a wall. Mr. Risting stated this is what is located across the street.

Mr. Fisher asked if there was concern there was too much brick and was it a visual or window problem. Mr. Bergman stated that it looks like the building has been designed from the inside out and there is concern about the urban design characteristics of the ground floor of the building.

Mr. Bergman stated he also had concerns about how the building relates to the sidewalk and what has been proposed at this point for the frontage on Washington Street would be a dead space. He stated it would be a space where you would have a brick wall or closed window treatments. Mr. Bergman stated people walking on the sidewalk there would not experience a lot of vitality that is encouraged downtown. He stated storefronts would create that vitality by having entrances that customers go in and out and windows that are full size.

Mr. Bergman stated that this could be an office space with window cells at the same height, but that project would have to go through this process as well for a similar discussion of urban design features. It presents a blank brick wall to pedestrians that are walking along the space. He stated it was setting a design barrier for retail space or commercial space to extend further north. Mr. Bergman stated he was concerned about the urban design features

at the sidewalk and ground floor.

Mr. Risting stated they were concerned about having the space on the first floor unoccupied if it was just retail on the first floor. He stated they did not want to waste any space in the building. Mr. Risting suggested adding planters along the site on Washington Street.

Mr. Fisher asked Mr. Bergman how he would feel about lowering the window heights. He stated he did not know what that would do to the viability of the space as residential.

Mr. Risting suggested installing frosted glass on the lower level windows. Mr. Bergman stated it was his opinion that was not the correct solution. Mr. Risting stated this has been used on numerous buildings in Columbus and has been successful for controlled privacy. He stated they would like to have some residential on the ground floor.

Mr. Bergman stated that it was his opinion that the applicants felt it would be more inconvenient to deal with commercial space on the first floor and the market is there for residential now. He stated there might be some time to wait for the commercial spaces to develop. Mr. Bergman stated the Planning Department needs to think more long term about the vitality of downtown Columbus.

Mr. Bergman asked if there has been a market analysis done for commercial space needed for downtown that these decisions are based on. Ms. Sprague stated it was not an official market study. Mr. Risting stated it was on an observation level that they see the need for more downtown housing. He stated there was 8,000 square feet of commercial space that was going into the downtown Cummins office space that will be committed to restaurant space. He stated there was more commercial space coming to downtown and they were not sure that they could fill the entire first floor without some of it being residential.

Mr. Bergman stated that just observing walking down Washington Street there are not many empty storefronts that exist. He stated from observation that does not support that retail is not viable downtown. He stated if the space in the new Cummins building that is not even finished yet has been leased it would support the conclusion that there is a need for commercial space downtown. Mr. Bergman stated evidence is needed for the modification for living space on the first floor.

Mr. Fisher stated he would prefer to have business on the first floor, but it was his opinion that if now the City is saying we need housing downtown, then maybe we should consider this request. He stated there were other housing projects approved downtown, so why not this one.

Mr. Lang stated when this was first proposed it was going to be commercial on the first floor. He stated it was his opinion that the first floor should be the same as what was presented in the beginning when the garage was approved.

Mr. Risting stated this first floor would be built to code for commercial space and if the increase for tenants would present itself they could change the first floor.

Mr. Jerome stated it was his opinion that the first floor should be commercial.

Mr. Bergman stated there has been talk regarding turning the residential space into

commercial space at some point. Could it just be reversed and build the commercial shell and then if it does not fill it could be made residential. Mr. Risting stated ideally this is the plan they wanted to be approved.

Mr. Lang stated it was his opinion that they would be marketing the residential first then the commercial. Mr. Risting stated that the housing is needed now.

Mr. Lang opened the meeting to the public.

Ms. Catina Furnish, Real Estate Manager, with Cummins spoke in favor of this petition. She stated that Cummins was supporting this project with the residential being allowed on the north end of the building ground floor. Ms. Furnish stated they went through a process of choosing a developer that they wanted to collaborate with on this project. She stated they chose Sprague's because they could get the numbers to work to have any retail space at all on the first floor. She stated they wanted to support the retail on Washington Street and this was a good compromise.

Ms. Furnish stated she was responsible for the retail space in the new Cummins Office building and the space is leased. She stated to find creditable retailers has not been easy, especially ones that were willing to sign a long-term lease. She stated there has been a lot of new retail space that has become available.

Mr. Harris asked Ms. Furnish where the hard to lease retail space was located, in downtown or elsewhere in Columbus. She stated both, their market analysis of the national chains showed want to be located on National Road. She stated that Ms. Sprague is willing to spend a lot of money upfront for the commercial space, where most of the local or regional people did not want to put out the expense.

Mr. Lang closed the meeting to the public.

Mr. Jerome asked what the difference was in the cost of square footage with commercial versus residential. Mr. Risting stated that the cost for residential space was more. He stated there has been much discussion looking for a tenant for that commercial space.

Mr. Bergman asked how long the commercial space for the Cummins building had been on the market. Ms. Furnish it had been on the market for nine months, she stated they still had about 1800 square feet in the planning process. She stated there were multiple prospects, but Cummins was waiting to find the best fit.

Mr. Bergman stated that in less than a year, given Cummins' standards for that space and in a global down economy that was a quick turnaround for filling the space. He stated he thought that was a positive for commercial space in downtown Columbus, Indiana.

Mr. Hayward stated the space, if not even ready at this time, being already taken would show there is a potential for more commercial space in Columbus.

Mr. Harris asked if they had to sign a ten-year lease. Ms. Furnish stated yes, the cost was \$60.00 per square feet. Mr. Harris stated it was his opinion that downtown was viable.

Mr. Bergman asked Ms. Sprague what kind of commercial business they were looking for to

fill the space. Ms. Sprague stated someone with good credit, she stated it was not easier for her to do residential than commercial. She stated commercial tenants usually stayed longer and there is less worry. Ms. Sprague stated they wanted to build something that is substantial and would be a contribution to the City of Columbus.

Mr. Hatter stated that Ms. Sprague's vision regarding Columbus was inspiration to him and for the community. He stated it is a continuance of the vision that was had in the past for the community. Mr. Hatter stated that it was his opinion that he was willing to take a gamble on the proposed plan as presented and would approve it at this meeting. He stated if there must be an adjustment made to the outside, he would trust the petitioners.

Ms. Brown stated that when she reviewed the plan she was concerned with the apartments on the ground floor. She stated after hearing the discussion at this meeting she stated she would be in favor of this proposal as long as they worked with staff on what the front looks like.

Ms. Sprague stated this was a project that would be kept in the family and it would be part of their legacy in Columbus.

Mr. Harris asked if staff has a recommendation.

Mr. Bergman stated he would recommend a continuance to the September 2012 meeting. He stated he would like to see more information on how the ground floor is treated.

Mr. Gaynor stated it appears that many of the objections have been centered on the ground floor apartments and what they would look like. He stated that if there was agreement on what the front of the building would look like he would not object to the approval of the request. Mr. Gaynor asked if Washington Street was defined differently than the other streets in the downtown area.

Mr. Bergman stated no, except the Comprehensive Plan has some language in the Downtown Plan that talks about what the expectations are for Washington Street.

Motion: Mr. Fisher made a motion to approve the modification for **DP-12-19** to have a structure 65 feet, 5 feet taller than the 60 feet maximum allowed in the CD Zoning District. Ms. Brown seconded the motion and it carried unanimously by voice vote.

Motion: Mr. Fisher made a motion to approve the modification for **DP-12-19** to allow residential on the first floor. Mr. Hatter seconded the motion and it carried unanimously by voice vote.

Mr. Bergman stated staff would recommend that the Plan Commission approve the façade of the building, rather than making the design subject to staff approval. He stated maybe the modifications could be approved at this meeting and then a continuance of the overall approval so that they can come back next month to have the façade discussion. Mr. Whitted stated if there were still concerns with the appearance of the building, it would be difficult to do further review that if full approval were given.

Mr. Risting stated they would be agreeable to the two conditions that were requested, one would be construction of the first floor to commercial standards and the second would be staff review of the details of the new façade on the first floor.

Mr. Bergman stated that staff's concern with this is that they might have a completely different opinion of what kind of façade treatment is appropriate or necessary than what the Commission does. He stated staff would be reluctant to have that kind of discretion to approve this part of the request. Mr. Bergman stated staff would recommend a continuance until the final design of the façade is completed.

Mr. Risting stated it was important to the petitioner to know if living units would be allowed on the first floor when figuring costs. He stated they would like this approval at this meeting.

Mr. Whitted stated that his concern was with giving them approval, then coming back and there being some misunderstanding about where we were going, as opposed to giving them the commitment and then coming back with the final design and approving it all as a package.

Motion: Mr. Fisher made a motion to approve **DP-12-19** along with the following conditions: The first floor of the building, including the area proposed to be residential, should be built to commercial standards to allow conversion of the residential units to commercial use at some point in the future. The Plan Commission asked that they return at some point in the future and explain the design features that were ultimately used at street level, particularly along the residential section. Mr. Gaynor seconded the motion and it carried with a vote of 9-1 with Mr. Hayward being the nay vote.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

Mr. Bergman announced that Heather Pope would be leaving the Planning Department and would become the new Redevelopment Director for the City of Columbus.

Discussion with City Utilities regarding the extension of sewer and water services outside the City limits and the required Annexation Agreement (**Continued pending City Council input**).

DIRECTOR'S REPORT

LIASION REPORT

ADJOURNMENT: 9:00 p.m.


Roger Lang, President


Dave Hayward, Secretary

